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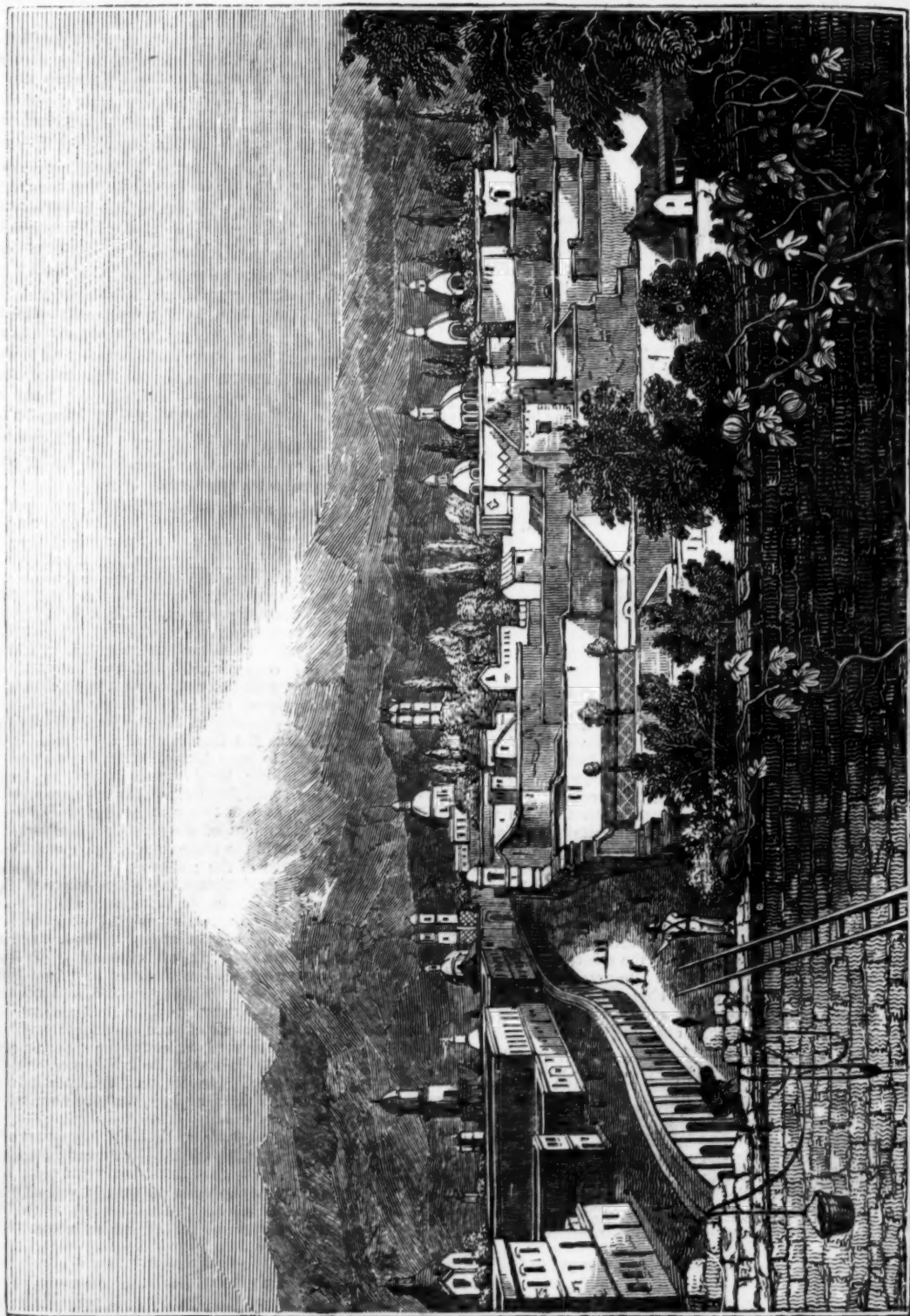
SUPPLEMENT,

MARCH, 1835.

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UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL LITERATURE AND EDUCATION,
APPOINTED BY THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.



THE CITY OF MEXICO.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE CITY OF MEXICO.

PART THE SECOND.

THE modern city of Mexico stands partly on the site of the ancient one. This latter, as our readers will remember, from our description in a preceding number, was built on a group of islands in the midst of the lake of Tezcuco, being surrounded on all sides by water, and communicating with the main land by artificial dikes; the present capital, on the other hand, is situated at a distance of between two and three miles from the lake. Persons may be inclined, therefore, to use Humboldt's words, either to doubt the accuracy of the descriptions in the history of the discoveries in the New World, or to believe that the capital of Mexico does not stand on the same ground with the old residence of Montezuma; "but the city has certainly not changed its place, for the Cathedral of Mexico occupies exactly the ground where the temple of Huitzilopochtli stood, and the present street of Tacuba, is the old street of Tlacopan, through which Cortez made his famous retreat, on the melancholy night of the 1st of July, 1520." The difference of situation arises solely from the diminution of the water of the lake of Tezcuco, a diminution which is to be attributed to both natural and artificial causes.

In order to give our readers some idea of the general appearance of the modern city of Mexico, we must again have recourse to the language of Humboldt, whose imaginary picture of the ancient capital, we transferred to our pages in a former number, and whose descriptions are always as much remarkable for their eloquence, as their accuracy. "Mexico," he says, "is without doubt one of the most beautiful cities that Europeans have founded in either hemisphere. With the exception of St. Petersburg, Berlin, Philadelphia, and the more modern parts of London, no town of the same extent can bear comparison with it, for the uniform level of the ground which it occupies, for the regularity and breadth of the streets, and for the size of the public places. The architecture is in general pure, and in some instances, very beautiful; the buildings are not loaded with superfluous ornament, while the stone and porphyry of which they are constructed, give them an air of solidity, and occasionally, even of magnificence. Nothing, indeed, can be more rich and varied, than the picture which the valley presents from the Cathedral-tower, on a fine summer's morning, when the air is clear and pure, and the cloudless sky exhibits that deep-blue tint, which is peculiar to the dry atmosphere of an elevated position. Immediately beneath the spectator, lies the city with its magnificent buildings; beyond its limits, on every side, the eye sweeps over a vast plain of carefully-cultivated fields, which stretch to the very foot of Colossal mountains covered with perpetual snow. The city seems bathed by the waters of the lake of Tezcuco, whose basin, encircled with villages and hamlets, recalls to mind the most beautiful lakes of the Swiss mountains. Noble avenues of elm and poplar lead from every side to the capital; two aqueducts, raised on lofty arches, traverse the plain, and exhibit an appearance equally agreeable and interesting. To the north is seen the magnificent convent of Our Lady of Guadalupe, backed by the mountains Tepeyacac; and around it, the ground is diversified by ravines overgrown with palms, and the arborescent yucca. Towards the south, the whole plain appears one immense garden of orange, peach, apple, cherry, and other European fruit-trees. This beautiful cultivation forms a singular contrast with the wild appearance of the naked mountains which enclose the valley, and among which the famous volcanoes of La Puebla, Popocatepetl, and Iztaccihuatl, are the most distinguished. The first of these forms an enormous cone, the crater of which, continually inflamed, and throwing up smoke and ashes, opens in the midst of eternal snows."

This is certainly a splendid picture; we know no other capital in the world, offering an equal combination of similar attractions. We must remark, however, that Humboldt has sometimes been charged with a disposition to view things in too favourable a light, occasionally overlooking defects, which have become visible to subsequent observers, in the objects which he describes, and thus presenting only one side of the picture, and that the bright one. The following extract from the pen of one of our

countrymen will supply his omission in the present instance, and will serve to show, that the spot which he has painted in such glowing colours, is not without considerable drawbacks on its beauty and general attractions.

"I have staid," says Mr. Beaufoy, in his interesting *Mexican Illustrations*, "on the roofs of the houses in Mexico, for a considerable time together, admiring the beauty of the buildings, the clearness of the sky, and the mountainous outline on every side. I have watched till the snow-capped peak of Popocatepetl, or the lower, but far finer and broken summits of Iztaccihuatl, have been distinctly visible above the masses of clouds; when they have been burnished by the rays of a setting sun, after all below was in darkness; and few men could have been more highly gratified. My enthusiasm, however, has not blinded me; I still disliked the swampy bleak flat which met my view each time I quitted the town. It did not make me transform half a dozen wild fruits, small stony wretched grapes, peaches like green almonds or bad turnips, into the luscious productions of the West Indies or English hot-houses. Neither did it warm my fancy so much, that the half-naked, miserable-looking Indians, and mixed castes, who crowd the streets, shivering at each rain-drop or gust of wind, under a ragged sort of blanket, then closely wrapped round them to the chin,—that these melancholy-looking wretches should seem the Arcadian peasants of poetic fiction."

THE GRAND SQUARE.

THE Grand Square of Mexico is very fine, being both spacious in itself, and surrounded by good buildings. A portion of it is represented in the engraving which we gave in our preceding number on this subject, and which is reduced from a splendid plate contained in Humboldt's *Atlas Pittoresque*, and copied originally from a picture by a Mexican artist. We should observe, however, that it is a matter of doubt whether the bronze equestrian statue of Charles the Fourth, which forms so prominent a portion of the view, and which was once the boast and ornament of the city, at present occupies its place. It was originally erected under the Spanish dominion, and is spoken of by all travellers as a very creditable work; indeed, as the finest specimen of casting in the New World. "It is admirably executed," says Mr. Poinsett, "and after that of Agrippa, in Rome, and Peter the Great, in St. Petersburg," is the most spirited and graceful equestrian statue I have ever seen. It was cast in Mexico, and the artist, Mr. Tolsa, succeeded at the first cast of the metal. He deserves great credit, to have himself moulded, cast, and placed a statue weighing forty thousand five hundred pounds, in a country so destitute of mechanical resources."

Beautiful, however, as was this statue, and much as it contributed to the adornment of the square, as indeed, of the whole city, it was still the statue of a king; and when, therefore, in the course of the unfortunate struggle with the mother-country, the colonists came to hate every thing regal, the very name of this noble monument sufficed to seal its fate. The Mexican liberals hesitated not to sacrifice all considerations of beauty and ornament, to the purity of their republican zeal; and the effigy of the Spanish monarch was removed with ignominy from the proud station which it had previously occupied, on its lofty pedestal in the Grand Square. Captain Lyon saw it standing neglected in the court of the University; and he says, that it may be considered as lost to the public, who sometimes speak of it, though why, he knows not, as the *Caballo de Troya*, or the Trojan Horse. Whether it has since been restored to its former place, we have no means of ascertaining.

The east side of the square, or that which appears in front of our view, is occupied by the Cathedral; on the north stands a noble building, which, under the old order of things, was the palace of the Spanish viceroy, and which became the imperial residence, during the short reign of Iturbide. At present, it comprises within its walls, the residence of the president, the senate-house, and all the principal public offices. On the south is a fine row of houses, in the centre of which stands the palace of the

* See *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. V., p. 214.

Marquess de Valle, (the descendant of Cortez,) vulgarly called the *Casa del Estado*. It was built soon after the conquest, on the site of the ancient palace of Montezuma. The western side is occupied by the *Portales*, a range of buildings with a piazza in front, consisting of shops, &c., and by a few public offices.

The pleasing effect of the Grand Square is, according to Mr. Bullock, much impaired by the presence of "a trumpery building, called the *Parian*." "A most odious and tasteless bazaar," as a still more modern traveller, Mr. Tudor, calls it, where a considerable portion of the retail business of the city is transacted. This is a quadrangular building, about one hundred and twenty yards in length, and intersected by a number of streets or passages, which divide it into uniform compartments; the whole of it is occupied by shops, the interior of which is laid open to view, by means of several doors, but no windows. The goods are fancifully exposed on stalls, between the doors without, or assorted on shelves within; the larger masses of commodities are kept in a room behind. The several entrances to this place are provided with strong gates, and watchmen are stationed both inside and outside, in whose charge property to any amount may be left in perfect safety. The commodities for sale consist of British and foreign goods, as well as of the produce of domestic manufactures.

This square is the place of resort for a curious class of people—the *Evangelistas*, as they are called—a sort of ready-writers whose business it is to indite memorials and epistles for those who cannot write themselves. "I saw about a dozen of these men," says Captain Lyon, "seated in various nooks near the shop-doors, occupied in penning letters from the dictation. Most of them, as might easily be perceived, were writing on different subjects; some treated of business, while others, again, as was evident by the transfixed hearts at the top of the paper, were transcribing the tender sentiments of the young men or women who were crouched down by their side. I looked over the shoulders of many of these useful scribes, as they sat with their paper placed on a small board resting on their knees, and did not observe one who wrote a bad or illegible hand." They have generally to arrange the verbal effusions of their customers into the shape of a tolerable piece of composition; and in this they display considerable dexterity and readiness. "Memorials to ministers and judges, letters of condolence and congratulation, and epistles breathing love and friendship, succeed each other rapidly," to use the words of Mr. Poinsett, "and appear to cost but little effort. Some of them," he adds, "are tolerable improvisatori—a faculty more common among the people of Spanish America than it is even among the Italians."

STREETS.

The streets of Mexico are all straight; most of them are between one and two miles in length, and they intersect each other at right angles. In looking down them towards the exterior of the city, the view is bounded by the distant country, and a pleasing illusion is thus produced. "Every one," says Mr. Ward, "who has resided in a southern climate, knows how much the purity of the atmosphere tends to diminish distances; but even at Madrid, where the summer-sky is beautifully clear, I never saw it produce this effect in so extraordinary a degree as at Mexico. The whole valley is surrounded with mountains, most of which are at least fifteen miles from the capital, yet, on looking down any of the principal streets, it appears to be terminated by a mass of rocks which are seen so distinctly that, on a fine day, one can trace all the undulations of the surface, and almost count the trees and little patches of vegetation which are scattered over it."

The streets of Mexico are perfectly level,—they have scarcely any inclination whatever. This circumstance, though productive of considerable convenience in some respects, is yet a source of much disadvantage in others; for after a heavy storm the water will remain stagnant for hours together; indeed, during the rainy season, it is not unfrequently the case that the streets are, for a short time, perfectly impassable on foot; and then those who are in a hurry, and who cannot send for a hackney coach, hire porters to carry them on their shoulders. Travellers give a laughable account of the tricks of these fellows. They carry their burden into the centre of the water, and then demand an increase of pay;—if the

unwise passenger murmurs at the request, he is quietly deposited in the gutter.

The streets of Mexico are very well paved,—both the portion appropriated to pedestrians, and that reserved for horses and vehicles. Carriages are rolling about the city all day long, in almost countless numbers; they begin to move about ten in the morning, and continue incessantly until the same hour at night. Every family of respectability keeps one or two coaches, and two pairs of mules. The bodies of these vehicles are handsome in form, though rather large; instead of being decorated with arms, as among us, they are gaudily bedizened with paintings of various subjects, often taken from the heathen mythology. The lower part is very clumsy;—the distance between the two axletrees is not less than twelve feet, and both before and behind there is a projection, to which are fastened the leathers that suspend the body of the machine. The mules are yoked some feet in advance, the coachman rides one of them, leaving the view before the carriage quite open. The appearance of the whole equipage, with the mules so far a-head, is described as ungraceful, especially to the eyes of those who are accustomed to the neatness of an English carriage; nevertheless, there is both safety and ease in the coach itself, and thus the stranger soon becomes reconciled to its appearance.

Mules are used, in Mexico, for draught, in preference to horses; and when large, they are valued at as high a sum as a thousand dollars (about two hundred pounds) the pair. Mr. Poinsett speaks of some which he saw in the stables of the Conde de Regla, a nobleman often mentioned by Humboldt as remarkable for his rich mines and his vast landed estates, whose height exceeded sixteen hands. "The greatest luxury of a Mexican," he adds, "is to have four of these fine mules drawing a carriage richly painted and varnished. Even when not used, they are kept harnessed to the carriage, and standing in the courtyard from morning to night. The harness is heavily ornamented with brass plates, and the tails of the mules are enclosed in stout leathern bags."

Nor is there any want of equestrians in the streets. Like the carriages, they begin to show themselves about ten in the morning; and, till sun-set, they continue parading, with a slow and stately pace,—the riders decked out in all the finery of the fashion, and the horses gaily caparisoned with a profusion of trappings. The complete equipment of a Mexican gentleman in the national riding-dress is very curious, and, moreover, enormously expensive. The back and quarters of the horse are covered with a coating of leather, sometimes stamped and gilt, and sometimes curiously wrought, but always terminating in a fringe or border of little tags of brass, iron, or silver, which make a prodigious jingling at every step. The saddle is large, and richly embroidered with silk, gold, and silver; in front it rises into a lofty pommel which is adorned with the same metals. The bridle is ugly in appearance, and connected, by large silver ornaments, with a powerful Arabic bit, of very great weight, which enables a rider to manage even the most spirited horses with facility.

The horseman himself is decked out in much the same style as his steed. First there is his *sombrero*, a low-crowned hat, with a brim six inches wide, and a broad edging of gold or silver lace; then he has a jacket of cloth or printed calico, likewise embroidered with gold or silk, or trimmed with rich fur; and a pair of breeches of some extraordinary colour, (pea-green or azure, Mr. Ward says,) open at the knee, to show the much-fringed *botas*, and terminating in two points considerably below it. To increase the attractive powers of these lower garments, they are thickly studded down the side with large silver buttons. Next comes the cloth *manga*, or riding-cloak, of blue or purple colour, which is often thrown over the saddle and crossed behind the rider in such a manner as to display the circular piece of velvet in the centre through which the head is passed when the *manga* is worn, and which is in general very beautifully embroidered.

The *bota*, however, is the chief article of the equipments,—the real pride of the true Mexican cavalier. "This," says Mr. Beaufoy, "is formed of the skin of a deer, well-tanned and soft; and being then stamped with a variety of pleasing figures, is bound round the leg with a coloured garter, below the knee; on horse-back it gives the rider a firmer hold than the English top-boot, because, being more flexible, it accommodates itself to every motion of the animal." The spurs are of a most primitive kind, weighing from a pound to a pound and a half each; they are

bound to the foot by rude chains and clumsy iron bars. The rows of these enormous instruments are quite in proportion; the common size is three inches in diameter, sometimes it reaches four, and if by any chance the wearer is forced to dismount, they trail at his heels, along the ground, in a style any thing but elegant.

HOUSES.

THE general appearance of the houses of Mexico is very good;—"there are none of those wooden balconies," to use the words of Humboldt, "which disfigure so much all the European cities in both the Indies. The balustrades and gates are all of Biscay iron, ornamented with bronze, and the houses, instead of roofs, have terraces like those in Italy and other southern countries." Many of these terraces are covered with flowers, which afford a pleasant place of resort in a fine evening, and, according to Mr. Bullock, give to the city, when seen from an elevation, a far more beautiful appearance than is offered by any in Europe—"where the red-tiled and deformed roofs and shapeless stacks of chimneys are the principal features in the prospect." The height of the houses is variously stated by different travellers; Mr. Ward says, they "seldom exceed one story"—the author of *A Sketch of the Customs and Society of Mexico*, says they are "mostly of two stories,"—Mr. Bullock says they are "generally of three,"—and Mr. Poinsett make them "of three and four." Their fronts are painted of various colours, white, crimson, brown, light-green, or yellow, and frequently have inscriptions upon them taken from Scripture; sometimes the paint is superseded by glazed porcelain arranged in a variety of designs, giving the whole a "rich and mosaic appearance."

As is the case in many continental cities, the practice very generally prevails in Mexico, of letting out the ground-floor of private houses, even the most splendid ones, as shops, stores, and manufactories. The entrance is generally by a pair of large folding-gates, which lead into an open court, filled with trees and flowers, and having the different apartments around it; a broad, handsome, stone staircase, conducts to the balconies, from which the approach is direct into the rooms. "Nothing," we are told, "can be better calculated than these residences for the delightful climate, in a country where change of temperature is scarcely known, where permanent spring reigns, where fire-places are never seen, and where it is scarcely necessary to have glass-windows, to exclude the night-air from the bed-rooms."

But the furniture, and internal decorations of the houses, ill accord with the appearance which they present externally. Carpets are very little used; a few of the houses of the nobility display small ones, or pieces. Hearth-rugs, of course, are not needed, where there are no fire-places; but they are considered to make capital saddle-cloths.

The chief deficiency is, however, not of things which have never been used in the country, but of things which were once in very common request: the cause of it is thus traced by Mr. Bullock. "The closing of the mines, the expulsion of the rich Spanish families, and sixteen years of revolutionary warfare, with all the concomitant miseries, have wrought a melancholy alteration in the fortunes of individuals, and in the general state of the country; and in this the capital bears no inconsiderable share. The superb tables, chandeliers, and other articles of furniture, of solid silver, the magnificent mirrors and pictures, framed in the same precious metal, have now passed through the mint, and, in the shape of dollars, are circulating over Europe and Asia; and families whose incomes have exceeded half-a-million per annum, can now scarcely procure the means of a scanty existence." There certainly has been nothing in the few years which have elapsed since Mr. Bullock wrote, to induce us to suppose that the state of things has at all improved.

SHOPS.

THE shops of Mexico are an interesting feature of the city, though, unlike our own, they make very little display. They have no windows, we are told, two or three doors allowing ingress at once "to the lights, the air, the dust, and the customer." The working of gold and silver, is carried to a considerable extent, and the shops which are devoted to the productions of this art, may stand at the head of all the rest. "The first sight of a milliner's shop," says Mr. Bullock, "must always raise a smile on the face of a newly-arrived foreigner. Twenty or thirty brawny fellows,

of all complexions, with mustachios, are exposed to the street, employed in decorating the dresses, and sewing muslin gowns, in making flowers, and trimming caps, and other articles of female attire; whilst perhaps at the next door, a number of poor girls are on their knees on the floor, engaged in the laborious occupation of grinding chocolate, which is here always performed by hand." The apothecaries' shops, or stores, are curious; the stock which they usually contain, is enormous,—perhaps filling a whole house,—and the prices which are charged for even the commonest articles, are exorbitant. Shops for the sale of brandy and *pulque*, (of which we shall speak below,) are but too common; and by the gay display of their various-coloured poisons, in handsome decanters, present such a temptation to the poor Indians, that few who possess a *media*, (a small coin worth about three-pence,) can carry it home."

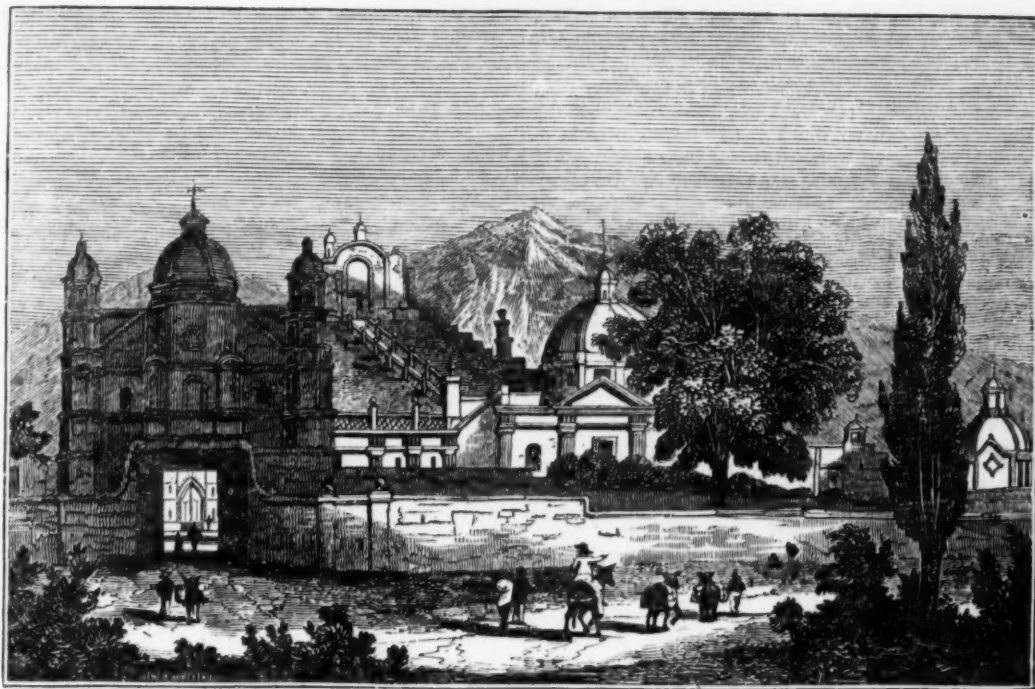
While speaking of shops, we may notice that there is one class of establishments very essential to the public accommodation, of which a great dearth exists in Mexico; we mean inns, and places similar to our coffee-houses, or the French *restaurants*. There is a *Sociedad Mexicana*, as well as some few other houses, where a room can be hired, but Mr. Beaufoy tells us, that neither beds nor other conveniences are to be found in them; four bare walls once whitewashed, a roof, and perhaps two boards to lie down on, are the extent of the accommodations afforded. Captain Lyon gives them much the same character; "the *Mesons*," he says, "are beyond description offensive and incommodious. Cook-shops," he adds, "for other than *arrieros* and *leperos* are very scarce, and an absolute stranger would live worse in Mexico, than the poor wretches who dive for their dinners in the regions of St. Giles."

There is a custom mentioned by one of the above gentlemen, as universal in Mexico; and which, he says, is exceedingly annoying to Europeans, who never heard of such a thing,—"the demanding of payment beforehand, for the articles ordered. Your washerwoman, on taking away the linen, asks for an advance of money to buy the soap; the tailor wants cash to purchase the cloth, the thread, the buttons; all do the same from the highest to the lowest. It is said to have arisen from a convenient forgetfulness the Spaniards used to be troubled with,—that of not paying for articles after they were delivered." The system is even extended beyond these small matters; if you purchase or hire a house, mines, or any thing, the owner insists on the whole or a part of the sum being given him at once. Contract with a man to supply you with timber or cotton, and he ends his agreement with "Provided you furnish me with such a proportion of the value, as may procure the necessary mules and oxen for the conveyance."

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

THE public buildings of Mexico are numerous and splendid; we can only glance at the principal among them, for a detailed description of all would far exceed our limits. The edifice which we mentioned as occupying the north side of the grand square, and which is still called the Palace, may, perhaps, be placed at the head of them; its pre-eminence in one respect is decided—it is the largest erection in the city. Mr. Bullock calls it "a truly magnificent building;" Mr. Beaufoy thought it "imposing only from its size." It has four large courts within, around which the different offices are distributed. The senate-house which is contained within this pile, is described as a small oval chamber very prettily furnished, having a little gallery for visitors at either end, but ill-situated for hearing. Captain Lyon visited it while the assembly was engaged in a debate; he says that "every thing seemed well-conducted, except that very strong language was unceremoniously made use of amongst the speakers. While the discussion was at its highest, the president all on a sudden gave notice that it was two o'clock—silence immediately ensued—all the members moved off—and thus ended the day;—it being an established rule, that no government-affairs should ever keep these patriots from their dinners and siestas, and that after the stated hour, every man should be permitted to retire and recruit exhausted nature."

The *Mineria*, or College of Mines, is a building erected by the same individual who cast the equestrian statue, of which we have spoken as standing, or having stood, in the Grand Square. Mr. Ward says that it is a magnificent building, the plan of which does honour to the architect; unfortunately, however, from some radical defect in the execution, the whole structure is now falling into ruins, or



CHURCH OF NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE, NEAR MEXICO.

was, at least, a few years ago. Most of the buildings in Mexico are necessarily built on piles, in consequence of the looseness of the soil; and it is supposed that there was some want of care in driving the piles on which the foundations of the Minería were laid, or, perhaps, that they were not driven to a sufficient depth. The consequence is, that the whole superstructure has given way, the lower floor having sunk below the level of the street. "It is quite melancholy," says Mr. Ward, "to see magnificent rows of columns, windows and doors completely out of the perpendicular, with walls and staircases cracking in every direction."

One of the courts of the Palace is occupied by a small botanic garden, which, previously to the Revolution, was very rich; soon after the beginning of that event, however, a portion of it was appropriated to barracks for the body guard of the viceroys. It is now chiefly remarkable for possessing two of the only three specimens known to exist in Mexico, of the celebrated *Arbol de las manitas*, (or tree of the little hands;) where they came from, or where others may be found growing in a wild state, nobody knows. The tree is about forty feet high, with a smooth trunk, destitute of branches almost to the top; but the boughs then stretch over a considerable distance, with large leaves and numerous flowers hanging downwards from among the foliage. These flowers are very beautiful, being of a red colour, and having the centre in the form of a hand, with the fingers a little bent inwards.

ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS.

Among the finest institutions which this capital could boast for the promotion of literature and art, the Academy of Painting and Sculpture, or the *Academia de los Nobles Artes*, as it is called, occupied a very high rank.

The picture which Humboldt has drawn of the state of this establishment, as it existed at the time of his visit to Mexico, is a very flattering one, and contrasts forcibly with the accounts which later writers have given us. The change in its condition has arisen from the same causes to which we are to attribute the general decline of this city, and the injury that has been suffered by other institutions; namely, the unfortunate circumstances in which the country has been placed, since the commencement of the struggle for independence against Spain. The following is Humboldt's description,—it will show our readers what this Academy once was.

"The revenues of the Academy of Fine Arts amount to 125,000 fraires, (upwards of £5000); of which the government gives 60,000, the body of Mexican miners nearly

25,000, and the *consulado* or association of merchants more than 15,000. Instruction is communicated *gratis*. It is not confined to the drawing of landscapes and figures; they have had the good sense to employ other means for exciting the national industry. The Academy labours successfully to introduce among the artisans a taste for elegance and beautiful forms. Large rooms, well lighted by Argand lamps, contain every evening some hundreds of young people, of whom some draw from *relievo*, or living models, while others copy drawings of furniture, chandeliers, or other ornaments in bronze. In this assemblage (and this is very remarkable, in the midst of a country where prejudices of the nobility against the castes, are so very inveterate,) rank, colour, and race, are confounded. We see the Indian and the Mestizo (or half-caste) sitting beside the white, and the son of a poor artisan, in emulation with the children of the great lords of the country. It is a consolation to observe, that under every zone the cultivation of science and arts establishes a certain equality among men, and obliterates, for a time at least, all those petty passions of which the effects are so prejudicial to social happiness."

The collection of casts belonging to this institution is remarkably fine, or at least was so; it is said to have cost the king of Spain upwards of £8000. When Mr. Poinsett saw them they were in excellent preservation, but it was doubtful, he says, how long they would remain so, as the roof was partly off immediately above them, and the rain fell upon the floor of the room in which they were placed. We find no mention of them in the works of any travellers who have visited the city recently; so that whether the state of things is at all improved, we have not the means of knowing.

The state of painting, unless greatly improved of late, cannot be very flourishing at present. Not one landscape or architectural painter remained in this great city when Mr. Bullock visited it: we can hardly see how the case could be otherwise, when the chief employment of the pencil is in decorating the panels of coach-bodies, and the heads of wooden bedsteads. There are a vast number of pictures, some of them old, in the churches and convents; but few have been found of any great merit, or "worth the expense of removing." There are scarcely any private collections; those that did exist in the olden days, have disappeared under the pressure of the calamities of modern times.

RELIGION.

The religion of the inhabitants of Mexico is the Roman Catholic; by the third article of the federal constitution, that is established exclusively as the religion of the state.

It was introduced by the Spaniards, and "propagated among the natives," according to Mr. Ward, "more by the arms of the first conquerors, than by the arguments of the friars who accompanied them;" and it has since been preserved during the last three centuries, "with all the intolerance of spirit for which the mother-country is so remarkable."

It is difficult, indeed, to conceive a stronger picture of mental debasement, than is exhibited in the religious condition of the great mass of the present population of Mexico. What must we think of a country where the whole, or nearly the whole people are so deeply sunk in superstition, as to yield implicit credence to some of the grossest fables that were ever invented for the deception of mankind,—where unbounded faith is reposed in the efficacy of a set of unmeaning or idolatrous mummeries,—where, to use Mr. Beaufoy's words, "not a hut or a garden, a pig-sty or a foot-path, can be used, until blessed and ornamented with a wooden cross,"—where the churches are crowded with images, "each one more revered than the Almighty himself;" and where "women and even men prostrate themselves on the floor at the raising of the host, and make the sign of the cross with their tongues amid the dust and filth?" All these things are sad evidences of degradation; and still further testimony may be found in many incidents which are related by travellers. As a specimen of the ludicrous extravagancies into which intolerance and credulity do lead the inhabitants of this country, our readers may take the fact, that some horses which had arrived from England were actually accused of heresy, (our own country being, of course, thought peculiarly heretical,) and would have been stoned to death, but for the timely interposition of a guard of soldiers. Unfortunately this state of things is not confined to the lower classes; at least, so we may infer from the circumstance of there having been some debate in the Mexican Congress about the national advantages that were likely to ensue from cashing one patron saint and electing another.

When we bear all these things in mind, we shall not find much difficulty in assenting to the position laid down by Mr. Poinsett, that "there is no country in Europe or America, where the superstitious forms of worship are more strictly observed than in Mexico. The Indians," adds that gentleman, "who were with difficulty won from their idolatry, love to blend the superstition of their former worship with the rites of the Catholic Church. They are fond of pageants and processions; and frequently represent the Nativity, Crucifixion, and other sacred mysteries of our holy religion. This disposition to represent heavenly things by sensible images, is common in all Catholic countries. I have seen theatrical representations of the Nativity in Rome. They tell us that the distinction between the sign and the thing signified is never lost sight of; but I cannot believe this to be true of the ignorant multitude of Rome, or of the poor Indians in Mexico. These poor people are as much idolaters as they were in the days of Montezuma.

CHURCHES.

THE churches of Mexico are very numerous; an American gentleman counted, within the limits of the city, 105 cupolas, spires, and domes; and the actual number of churches is about 60. Of these the most remarkable is the cathedral, which covers an immense space of ground; it stands on the site of the great temple of the ancient city, and under its foundations many valuable relics of Mexican antiquity are supposed to be buried. Its appearance is curious, as our readers may perceive by a reference to the Engraving which we gave of its principal front, in the former Supplement on Mexico. One portion is low, and of bad Gothic architecture; the remaining part, which is more handsome, is built in the Italian style, and decorated with statues, pilasters, and a variety of ornaments.

The interior of this edifice is highly embellished; but though riches have been lavished on it with profusion, there is nothing grand or imposing in its general effect. Its wooden carvings are beautifully executed, and, altogether, it is superior to the other churches of the city; the prevailing character, however, is gaudiness. "On entering," says Mr. Bullock, "I felt something like disappointment, notwithstanding the extent and magnificence of the interior. The centre is nearly filled by the ponderous erections, which entirely obstruct its otherwise fine appearance, and the high altar is too large for the place it occupies.

Many of the smaller paintings appeared to be of value, and works of the old Spanish and Italian masters; but they are so placed, and in such an obscure light, that it is not possible to judge decisively of their merit." The centre of the church is occupied by a balustrade, which is composed, according to Mr. Ward, of a metal brought from China through the Philippine Islands, and which is said to be a composition of brass and silver; it is massive, and adorned with a great many figures, but, on the whole, not remarkable for beauty. Mr. Bullock says, that the metal is considered to be of such value, that a silversmith of Mexico is said to have made an offer to the bishop, to construct a new rail of solid silver of the same weight, in exchange for it.

It is in the outer wall of this cathedral that is fixed the curious Calendar Stone, vulgarly called "Montezuma's Watch," by which the ancient Aztecs used to designate the months of the year. It is circular in form, and consists of a mass of porphyry, weighing more than 24 tons; in the centre is a hideous head, sculptured in relief, representing "the sun in his four motions;" around this is a double row of hieroglyphics, behind which again there are other circles in relief. At a little distance from it, and sunk in the earth, so as to leave only its surface exposed, is the famous Stone of Sacrifices, on which it has been supposed that the human sacrifices were performed in the ancient temple of Mexico. "It is in a complete state of preservation," says Mr. Ward, "and the little canals for carrying off the blood, with the hollow in the middle, into which the piece of jasper was inserted, upon which the back of the victim rested while his breast was laid open, and his palpitating heart submitted to the inspection of the high priest, give one still, after the lapse of three centuries, a very lively idea of the whole of this disgusting operation."

Humboldt, however, dissents from this opinion. "I am inclined to think," he says, "that the Stone of Sacrifices was never placed at the top of a *teocalli*, but was one of those stones called *temalcacatl*, on which the combat of the gladiators took place between the prisoners of rank, destined to be sacrificed, and a Mexican warrior. Placed on the *temalcacatl*, surrounded by an immense crowd of spectators, they were to fight six Mexican warriors in succession: if they were fortunate enough to conquer them, their liberty was granted them, and they were permitted to return to their native country; if, on the contrary, the prisoner sank under the strokes of one of his adversaries, a priest dragged him, dead or living, to the altar, and tore out his heart."

Among the other churches of Mexico, the chief are those attached to the Franciscan Convent, and the Monastery of La Professa. The church of Santa Theresa is also mentioned as "handsomely ornamented, and in good taste;" and that of La Encarnacion is spoken of as very rich and splendid, the principal altar being surmounted by "a pyramid of embossed silver, at least fifteen feet high."

At a short distance from Mexico, on the rocky hill of Tepeyacac, stands the Church of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*—Our Lady of Guadalupe, which is celebrated throughout the whole of Mexico for its miraculous origin, and the possession of an equally miraculous picture of the Virgin. The absurd legend occupies a huge folio volume; it may be briefly noticed in a few lines, thus. Soon after the conquest, a vision of the Virgin appeared to an Indian peasant, and ordered him to go to the Bishop of Mexico, relate what he had seen, and order the prelate to build a chapel on that very spot in her honour. The man approached the episcopal palace, but was intimidated by the state and magnificence that surrounded the bishop, and retired accordingly without obeying the orders he had received. On his return he again saw the vision, which rebuked him for his disobedience, and delivered a more positive command. The peasant asked for some token, to show that his mission was authentic: he was ordered to climb to the summit of the rock, and told that he would there find the sign which he required. The man obeyed, and though it was the midst of winter, he found the heretofore desolate spot covered with flowers. He gathered some, went instantly to the palace, obtained admittance, related all that had happened, and then presented the flowers. The tale was instantly credited, a procession to the rock set forth, and the picture was discovered. The church was immediately built, and munificently endowed.

Such is the ridiculous fable which is implicitly believed by the inhabitants of this country, as the real history of the origin and foundation of the church of Guadalupe.

So strong is its influence, that even to this day offerings are sent from every part of Mexico to this shrine of the Virgin. The first chapel was built at the top of the hill; a large one at its foot is now the principal one, and within its walls the picture is preserved. Several chapels have been erected at different times by individuals, and the whole collection presents rather a rich appearance. It is difficult to say to what style of architecture it belongs, as all pretensions to uniformity are destroyed by the numerous capellas (or chapels) erected in the vicinity of the principal edifice, by the more wealthy votaries of the virgin. One of them is very remarkable; having been built to commemorate an escape from shipwreck, it has assumed as much as possible the form of the sails of a ship. Our readers may, perhaps, perceive it in the engraving, which is copied from one of the plates in Mr. Ward's work.

POLICE.

"The city of Mexico," says Humboldt, "is remarkable for its excellent police. Most of the streets have very broad pavements, and they are clean and well lighted." He must use the word however more in its continental sense, than in the signification which we commonly attach to it, or else things must have greatly changed since the time when he wrote. The Mexican capital still continues to enjoy the advantages of broad pavements, and clean well-lighted streets; but, unfortunately, no man can walk them after night-fall, without running a considerable chance of being robbed or murdered. "We intended to go to the theatre," says Mr. Poinsett, "but first drove home to get our sabres, that we might walk home in the evening with safety. This will seem a very strange precaution in a civilized country, but it is absolutely necessary. The porter of our house seeing me go out in the evening when I first arrived, without being armed, remonstrated with me on what he was pleased to call my rashness; and, on inquiry, I found that it was considered imprudent to do so. I was told robberies and assassinations were frequent, and that not less than twelve hundred assassinations had been committed since the entrance of the revolutionary army into the capital. I could not learn that any of them had been detected and punished." Surely, then, if the police be excellent in the one sense, it is execrable in the other.

But this is not the worst; in the immediate vicinity of the capital, robberies are openly committed in the face of day. The ruined suburbs afford every advantage for the commission of crime, and the concealment of the offender; so that no one thinks of taking a walk into the outskirts of the capital without pistols and companions. It is not, however, by the lowest classes alone of the community that these offences are committed; individuals of a much higher order have been known to be engaged in them. Their mode of proceeding is to sally forth, well mounted, in large parties, and drag their victim from his horse by means of the well-known lasso; they then strip him of his clothes, as well as his money, and should he be unwise enough to resist, sometimes murder him. Mr. Beaufoy says, that soon after he left Mexico, an English gentleman, newly arrived in the capital, was stopped, robbed, and stripped, close to the gate of the city. He was riding quietly about the environs, comparing the open pages of Bullock's book with what he saw himself, when he was disagreeably interrupted by a lasso, and rather a violent fall from his horse. Some five-and-twenty Mexican gentlemen rode by, but, seeing what was going on, they very prudently did not interfere; had they done so, one of two evils must have occurred; either the Englishman would have got stabbed, or their countrymen would have lost their booty. Pistols are the most formidable weapons which the traveller can carry for his own protection; indeed, they are the only weapons to be relied on as a means of defence, for the natives are very good swordsmen, and when they have the advantage of numbers, will not be intimidated by any thing but firearms. Europeans are generally provided with them, and have, therefore, seldom been openly assaulted; whereas, some ludicrous instances have occurred of Mexican gentry coming back to town without their shirts.

Judging from the accounts of different travellers, we may infer that the state of the police in the capital, depends altogether on the character of the government generally, or of the individual functionary, within whose department the care of the lives and properties of its inhabitants may happen to fall. It would appear, that sometimes the authority of the state is exerted for the protection of its subjects,

by a vigorous repression of crime, while at others they are quietly left to take care of themselves in the best way they can. It is easy to conceive that under the old Spanish rule, the jealousy of the government may have led to a better system, and to a stricter enforcement of the laws, against all disturbers of the public peace; nor is it more difficult to understand how, in the course of the long revolutionary struggle which has uprooted the whole system of government in Mexico, and left the country a prey to contending factions, the efficiency of the police may have become relaxed, and a license have been assumed by evil-doers, to violate the laws with impunity.

PUBLIC WALKS.

LIKE most cities of Spain, and cities of Spanish origin, Mexico has famous public walks. The *Alameda* and the *Pasco Nuevo* are the principal ones; the former is more especially celebrated. Unluckily, however, it has shared in the common decline of all things in this capital, and no longer presents the same scenes of splendour which characterized it in former days; nevertheless it is still a place which possesses very considerable attractions, and is looked upon as a very important appendage to the city, by all its pleasure-loving inhabitants. Our extracts will enable our readers to compare its present condition with the appearance which it offered in the olden time, when, as a colony of Spain, Mexico enjoyed some portion of the prosperity which attached to the mother-country. The first is from the pen of Thomas Gage, commonly called Friar Gage, who resided in the capital for some time, during the year 1625.

"The gallants of this city," he says, "show themselves daily here on horseback, and most in coaches about four of the clock in the afternoon, in a pleasant shady field called *la Alameda*, full of trees and walks, somewhat like unto our *Moor-fields*, where do meet as constantly as the merchants upon our Exchange, about two thousand coaches, full of gallants, ladies, and citizens, to see and to be seen, to court and to be courted, the gentlemen having their train of blackmore slaves, some a dozen, some half-a-dozen, waiting on them, in brave and gallant liveries, heavy with gold and silver lace, with silk stockings on their black legs, and roses on their feet, and swords by their sides; the ladies also carry their train by their coaches' side, of jet-like damsels, who, with their bravery and white mantles over them, seem to be, as the Spaniard saith, *mosca en leche*, a fly in milk. But the train of the viceroy, who often goeth to this place, is wonderful stately, which some say, is as great as the train of his master, the king of Spain. At this meeting are carried about, many sorts of sweetmeats and papers of comfits to be sold, for to relish a cup of cool water, which is cried about in curious glasses. But many times," continues this quaint describer, "their meetings, sweetened with conserves and comfits, have sowre sauce at the end, for jealousy will not suffer a lady to be courted, no, nor sometimes to be spoken to, but puts fury into the violent hand, to draw a sword or dagger, and to stab or murder whom he was jealous of, and when one sword is drawn, thousands are presently drawn, some to right the party wounded or murdered, others to defend the party murdering, whose friends will not permit him to be apprehended, but will guard him with drawn swords, until they have conveyed him to the sanctuary of some church, from whence the viceroy his power is not able to take him for a legal trial."

It would certainly be quite useless to look now-a-days for such a scene of splendour on the *Alameda* of Mexico; the trains of slaves "with silk stockings on their black legs and roses on their feet, and swords by their sides," have all passed away with the prosperity of this country. Of the size of this place our readers may, perhaps, be unable to form an idea from Gage's statement, that it was "like unto our *Moor-fields*" of the sixteenth century. Mr. Beaufoy says it is about as large as Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is laid out in lines radiating from different centres, and planted with avenues of trees, shrubberies, &c. It has a carriage-road round it, to which it is the fashion for ladies to drive out about four in the afternoon, and their carriages being drawn up in a long line, often remain stationary for hours.

"Amongst the many curious scenes that Mexico presented," says Mr. Ward, "I know none with which we were more struck than the *Alameda*. As compared with the *Prado* of Madrid, it was, indeed, deprived of its brightest

* To be described in a future portion of this work.

ornament, the women; for few or none of the ladies of Mexico ever appear in public on foot: but to compensate this, it had the merit of being totally unlike any thing that we had ever seen before. On a Sunday, or *Día de Fiesta* (Festival Day,) the avenues were crowded with enormous coaches, in each of which were seated two or more ladies, dressed in full evening costume, and whiling away the time with a segar, in awaiting the approach of some of the numerous gentlemen walking or riding near. Nor were the equestrians less remarkable; for most of them were equipped in the full riding-dress of the country, differing from that worn by the lower orders, only in the richness of the materials." We have already described this dress, as well as the enormous coaches here spoken of.

The Paseo Nuevo is another walk of note; it consists of a broad road, raised about three feet above the meadow that surrounds the city, and planted on both sides with trees. The *Paseo de las Vigas* forms a third; it runs by the side of the Chalco Canal, along which the native Indians convey to the city the fruits, flowers, and vegetables which are produced in their gardens. At an early hour in the morning, when the canal is crowded with boats pushing along to the markets, it presents an animated scene.

THE POPULATION.

THE best place for obtaining a general view of the population of Mexico is the Portales. "Here," says Captain Lyon, "the stranger sees the most extraordinary variety of people and things huddled together, into an apparently confused, yet well-ordered mass. Several principal shops open to the Portales, and innumerable petty vendors of both sexes also display their wares crowded on tables, in boxes and baskets, in frames, or spread on the ground; while half-naked leperos, sleeping, overpowered by pulque, or begging of the passers-by; priests, monks, officers, Indians, ladies, and Europeans, form a continually-moving motley crowd. At one turn may be met the water-carrier with an immense jar hanging at his back, suspended by a broad leather belt from the head, while a smaller vessel hangs by another strap in front to maintain the balance. In a different quarter is seen a stout lepero bearing a chair slung from his head and shoulders, and in which is seated an old importunate beggar. On turning to avoid this object, there is a chance of stumbling over the fruit and flowers of some poor quiet Indian woman, as she sits crouched against a pillar, while the ear is frequently saluted by the loud cries of the newsmen, who sell in considerable quantities the publications of the day; proclamations for or against the Gapuchines (Spaniards), the priests, the election of deputies, or whatever may be the most agitating topic of the day."

The leperos mentioned in this extract are the most curious class of the population of Mexico; they resemble



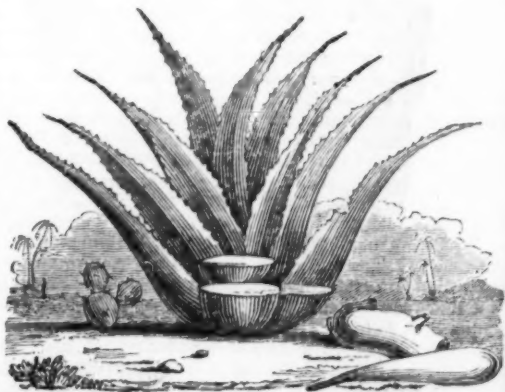
MEXICAN WATER-CARRIER.

the lazzaroni of Naples in every thing, with this only difference that instead of eating macaroni they drink pulque.

This *pulque* is the favourite beverage of the lower classes in the city of Mexico, and in a very considerable portion of the republic around; it is the produce of a plant called *Magney*, or *Mett*, or *Pittes*, a species of *Agave Americana*, or American Aloe. The growth of the plant is slow, but when it has reached maturity, its height varies from six to eight feet, with leaves of corresponding size; it will flourish with very little culture, on the poorest soil. In some parts of the country, there are regular plantations of this useful production; the plants are there arranged in lines, with an interval of about three yards between each. When the period of flowering arrives, the plant begins to be productive; it is on this account extremely important to the cultivator, to know exactly the time of efflorescence. The Mexicans learn its approach by certain signs which they attentively observe; they know almost the very hour in which the stem, or central shoot, which is destined to produce the flower, is about to appear, and they anticipate it by making a deep incision, and extracting the whole heart or bundle of central leaves (*el corazon*), leaving nothing but the thick outside rind, which forms a natural basin or wall, about two feet deep, and one and a half in diameter (see the Engraving.) Into this the sap, which would have gone to support the large shoot which has been cut off, is continually oozing in such quantities, that it is found necessary to remove it two or three times a day. This sap is allowed to ferment, and in a week or two it becomes *pulque* in the best state for drinking.

"The natives," says Mr. Ward, "ascribe to *pulque* as many good qualities as whisky is said to possess in Scotland. They call it stomachic, a great promoter of digestion and sleep, and an excellent remedy in many diseases. It requires a knowledge of all these good qualities, to reconcile the stranger to that smell of sour milk, or slightly-tainted meat, by which the young *pulque*-drinker is usually disgusted; but if this can be surmounted, *pulque* will be found both a refreshing and a wholesome beverage, for its intoxicating qualities are very slight, and as it is drunk always in a state of fermentation, it possesses, even in the hottest weather, an agreeable coolness." The offensive smell in question is attributed to the dirty pig-skins in which it is conveyed from the place of culture to large towns. There is also a strong sort of brandy, called *Mexical*, or *aguardiente de Magney*, prepared from this plant, and of this the consumption is great.

The cultivation of the magney thus possesses considerable advantages. To use Humboldt's words, "a proprietor who plants from 30,000 to 40,000 magney is sure to establish the fortune of his children." But it requires a degree of patience seldom found among the Indians of Mexico, to pursue a species of cultivation which only begins to grow lucrative at the end of fifteen years. In a good soil, the plant reaches the period of flowering in five years; in a poor one, no harvest can be expected in less than eighteen years. The plant is destroyed, if the incision be made too early,—that is to say, long before the flowers would have naturally developed themselves.



THE PULQUE PLANT.